

Improve Your Health and Fitness at Home - 10 Top Tips

10 Ways to stay Healthier at Home Many people spend all or part of the week working from home, caring for children, parents and relatives, or keeping house. All of these things can be just as demanding and stressful as going to work each day. And you may need strategies to make your experience of home life healthier.

1. Fill house with healthy food and snacks for adults and children. Avoid snacking on treats bought for the kids, making sure your children eat healthy snacks such as raisins, fruit, rice crackers etc rather than sugary, salty or fatty snacks. Fill a container with strips of cucumber, peppers, celery and carrot, grapes, blueberries and strawberries, maybe a little cold salmon or hard-boiled eggs, ensuring there is always something to snack on if you find yourself staring into the fridge without quite knowing how you got there.
2. Have a glass of water every hour. Often the body mistakes thirst for hunger- you may automatically reach for food when you need a drink. Buy a filter jug, or some mineral water, drink with a slice of orange or lime, and encourage children to drink water or dilute fresh fruit juice. Limit yourself to one of two coffees or teas, and stock up on interesting herbal teas for variety.
3. Beat Boredom; hunger may result from boredom- your body is telling you to get up and get a change of scene. Go for frequent little walks, take small children to post a letter, buy a newspaper, have a stroll around the block, or go outside and pull some weeds up. Small changes will keep your brain stimulated. If you are working from home, get up for a couple of minutes every half an hour to keep the body mobile (avoiding back pain) and to refresh your brain. If you cannot leave the house, do something different for five minutes, open a window and get some fresh air, or put some music on.
4. Treat housework as a work out. Turn on the stereo, and perform each task with energy. Vacuuming, floor scrubbing, cleaning windows, gardening and sweeping for 30 minutes each day will keep you healthier.
5. Protect your family from environmental toxins. Safely dispose of dangerous and unpleasant chemical cleaners, go for old-fashioned alternatives (such as vinegar and bicarbonate of soda) or eco-friendly brands, and use some elbow grease.
 - Recent research has shown that household cleaning residues cross the placenta to your unborn baby (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4223984.stm>).
 - Cleaning products are linked to asthma in adults and children.
 - The average household contains in excess of 20 gallons of hazardous chemicals- many in cleaning products.
 - Most poisonings, particularly of children occur in the home. Children under the age of 6 are usually poisoned with cleaning products.
 - Out of 70,000 synthetic chemicals in production, many are linked to cancer and other health problems, but only 600 have been adequately tested. (U.S. Office of Environmental Affairs).
 - Many air fresheners contain chemicals harmful to your health, such as artificial musk. Avoid sprays, and swap for an oil burner and pure essential oils such as lavender- much cheaper in the long run.
6. Use the stairs as exercise equipment! When you come to the bottom step, jump off with both feet, and land with slightly bent knees. The impact will strengthen the bones of your ankles, legs and hips, guarding against future risk of osteoporosis. (Do not do this if you have existing bone problems or injuries).
7. Mums of young children- get out with that push chair! Pushing a child around (especially with all those bags kid-stuff) can be challenging exercise. Choose a push chair which does not encourage you to stoop and round your shoulders- many now have adjustable handles. Get out to parks and shops, take the hilly route, stand tall, pulling in your tummy and power along with that pram. Some instructors run push-chair workouts in local parks for new mums- keep your eyes peeled, or invite some friends and do it yourself.
8. Take care whilst preparing food. It can become habitual to finish off children's food and eat your own as well, or eat tea with kids and then later with a partner. This road leads to steady weight gain making many parents unhappy and unhealthy. Try to stay aware whilst preparing the endless drinks, meals and snacks demanded by children, that you are not falling into bad habits.
9. Stay organized. There is so much to do, and it can easily spiral into chaos, leaving you stressed and tired. Take a business-like overview of your week, making the most of your time and resources. For example, try to make several meals out of one cooking session. Prepare extra pasta, rice, green beans, roasted vegetables to be eaten cold as salads in lunchboxes or for snacks and meals, use the same ingredients for several meals- roast red peppers for sauces, soups, salads etc, if you are making one pie/lasagna/soup make two or three and freeze them, marking them with the date you made them. Prepare children's lunch boxes while you are making their tea- using the same ingredients- rice, veggie sausages, cherry tomatoes....
10. Make some time to exercise- reducing stress, achieving personal goals, improving fitness, losing baby weight, and having some time for yourself. If you have young children, look out for local health clubs with crèche facilities or mother-and-baby classes (many council facilities are very affordable). Some clubs also provide classes for older children, and you can use the free time to go for a swim or to the gym. Alternately, buy an exercise or yoga video, or some hand weights and a gym ball. Just 15 minutes of toning exercise a day will make a difference.

I do hope that this has given you some ideas that you can work with. Until next time, Stay healthy, Vikki. Do you have any friends and family who could benefit from getting fitter and feeling better? If you do, then treat them to free copy of this newsletter, forward it to them, and get them to e-mail me with a request. E-mail getfitter@yahoo.co.uk subject: newsletter request. Would you like to bring health into the workplace? Get fitter now offers a corporate package, including yoga classes/courses, Nutrition seminars, conference breaks, Company Wellness days and Healthy Friday a monthly wellness event. The information contained in the Get fitter Newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for the advice of or treatment that may be prescribed by your physician. Before adhering to any recommendations or undertaking any exercise program or diet regimen, you should consult your physician.

About the Author

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